

Seattle Permits

— part of a multi-departmental City of Seattle series on getting a permit

Transportation Mitigation Payments

South Lake Union

October 10, 2005

This Client Assistance Memo (CAM) explains the applicable regulations and process for making transportation mitigation payments in South Lake Union. This can be done as an alternative to directly providing mitigation required by permit conditions imposed pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) as part of environmental review conducted in the master use permit process.

Payments are based on the cost of transportation improvements identified in a City of Seattle prepared area-wide transportation study. Payments are calculated by general land use categories and amount of floor area or number of dwelling units in a proposed development. The payments will be applied to a comprehensive set of transportation improvements identified in the transportation study, based on a development's impact.

Permit applicants have the option of making use of the City's transportation study for purposes of the transportation analysis often required as part of environmental review, and making the mitigation payment; or preparing their own study of the proposed project's impact and developing mitigation proposals for the department's consideration. In some cases, the department may require additional transportation analysis, such as when aspects of a development proposal have not been adequately considered in the City study. By choosing this option, applicants agree to the transportation improvements on the list. In any event, the department will review each development proposal to make sure the mitigation is appropriately related to the anticipated impacts.

Currently this mitigation payment option is available for development in South Lake Union. The City has

plans to expand the program to downtown, Northgate and the University District in 2006.

Why South Lake Union?

By 2025, South Lake Union will be home to 16,000 new jobs and 8,000 new housing units, as targeted in the City's Comprehensive Plan. To prepare for this growth and to fix existing conditions like the Mercer "mess," the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) prepared the South Lake Union Transportation Study, which includes a list of projects for the next 20 years.

The study coordinates analysis and recommendations identified through the South Lake Union Neighborhood Plan, the Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Project, the Mercer Corridor Project and other recent planning efforts. The study also includes a funding plan. Part of the funding will include contributions from new development in the form of mitigation payments.

A list of the transportation improvements to be funded and a mitigation payment schedule are listed on pages 4-5 of this CAM.

Benefits of Transportation Mitigation

In many cases, participation in this mitigation program will result in a faster permit review process. For example, a development proposal that receives a determination of significance from the department may qualify for a mitigated determination of nonsignificance, as comprehensive mitigation is essentially built into the proposal by participation in this program. Other benefits of the mitigation program are that it:

- uses neighborhood-wide rather than piecemeal, project-by-project transportation improvements;
- directs funding to transportation projects instead of traffic studies; and
- increases predictability for development with more expedient environmental review. Fewer projects will likely go through an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, particularly in areas such as



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South Lake Union, where transportation is often what triggers an EIS.

Environmental Review

The environmental impacts of development proposals must be assessed per SEPA, RCW Chapter 43.21C, and the City's SEPA ordinance, Seattle Municipal Code Chapter 25.05. This is required when establishing a new use or changing or expanding an existing use that meets the criteria listed in the City's SEPA ordinance.

Environmental review is part of the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) master use permit process. Other components may be required. If a project is required to have SEPA review, DPD analyzes environmental impacts and issues an environmental threshold decision. The following are the three major types of threshold determinations:

- **Determination of Non-Significance (DNS):** No probable significant adverse environmental impacts will result from a proposal. Conditions may be imposed to mitigate adverse impacts.
- **Determination of Significance (DS):** Probable significant adverse impacts may result from a proposal and an EIS is required.
- **Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance (MDNS):** Changes are made to or mitigation included in a proposal prior to or after a DS that reduces or eliminates probable significant adverse impacts. No EIS is required.

What is transportation mitigation?

DPD has the authority to deny or reasonably condition any proposal in order to mitigate or prevent adverse environmental impacts. As a result of environmental review, a project may be conditioned when a DNS or MDNS is made or when a permit decision involving an EIS (the result of a DS) is made. Conditioning is based on adopted City policies, plans, rules or regulations.

Mitigation is generally a one-time obligation by new development to provide capital or programmatic improvements to the transportation system, or to pay the City for the cost of facilities or programs that are needed to serve new development.

Development impacts on transportation typically take the form of increased use of transportation systems and programs including roads, transit, bicycle and pedestrian. The increased use of one or more of these modes of travel consumes resources and

without improvement may cause them to become less effective and efficient. Other impacts include decreased safety and increased air pollution. Conditioning for transportation mitigation is guided by the transportation policies in SEPA, and these policies generally seek to require new development to offset some or all of its impacts on transportation.

How were the mitigation payments set?

The mitigation payments are based on a list of transportation improvements identified in the study for each mode of travel. This list of improvements is the basis for calculating the cost of mitigation needed to reduce or eliminate the impacts of growth. A portion of the costs for these improvements is attributable to existing deficiencies and must be funded with resources other than private developer mitigation payments. The portion attributable to a new project should be paid for by that development, as mitigation.

To calculate the payment, the portion of improvements that serve new growth is divided by the number of trips generated by the new development. The term "trips" refers to people coming to or going from a new development, which can vary by the type of use or mix of uses in a new development.

The payment amounts, related to general land use categories, are on page 5 of this CAM. Transportation Management Plans (TMPs) may be used in conjunction with mitigation payments and may lead to reductions in the payment amount commensurate with single occupancy vehicle trip reductions. In addition to transportation mitigation payments, applicants may be required to make other improvements such as curbcuts or sidewalk improvements adjacent to their development site.

City Use of Funds Received through Transportation Mitigation Payments

Funds received through transportation mitigation payments will be earmarked specifically for improvements on the attached list. The funds will be retained in special reserve accounts. Any payment not expended within five years will be refunded with interest, unless the delay is attributable to the developer, in which case it will be refunded without interest.

South Lake Union Transportation Study

Completed in July 2004 by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) with the help of consultants

Parsons Brinckerhoff and EnviroIssues, the South Lake Union Transportation Study presents a package of transportation improvements for the South Lake Union area, with broad support from a diverse group of neighborhood, business and community representatives.

The improvements call for a two-way Mercer Street, a streetcar and a number of other transit, pedestrian and bicycle measures that, taken together:

- reconnect a growing neighborhood to the city;
- untangle streets that create barriers in the middle of Seattle;
- improve mobility;
- promote transit, walking and biking; and
- continue a smooth flow of freight and people through the corridor.

The South Lake Union Transportation Study is available at the Department of Transportation's website: www.seattle.gov/transportation/southlakeunion.htm

Further Information

For more detailed information on the environmental review process, and transportation mitigation in particular, you may:

1. Visit the DPD Applicant Services Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., to discuss your plans with a land use planner. Land use planners are available Mon., Wed. and Fri., 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; Tue. and Thur., 10:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
2. Call DPD's transportation planner or the land use policy group at 684-8850.
3. Submit questions online using DPD's Land Use "Question & Answer Service" at www.seattle.gov/dpd/landuse.

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of DPD **Client Assistance Memos (CAMs)** and **commonly used forms** are available on the "Publications" page of our website at www.seattle.gov/dpd/publications. Paper copies of these documents, as well as additional regulations mentioned in this CAM, are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS BY MODE

Auto Traffic Projects

Two-Way Mercer/Narrow Valley Concept

1. Construct seven-lane two-way on Mercer St. between Fairview and Dexter Ave.
2. Construct two-lane with left turn lanes on Valley St.
3. Add signal at Dexter Ave. and Republican St.

Mercer/Fairview/I-5 Ramps

1. Widen roadway (northbound right-turn) and improve signage on northbound Fairview Ave. approach to I-5 on-ramps.

Thomas East of Aurora

1. Construct three-lane on Thomas St. from Fairview Ave. to 5th Ave. (including left turn lanes).

Two-way traffic on 9th and Westlake

1. Construct two-way on Westlake Ave. (four to five lanes) and 9th Ave. (three lanes) from Aloha St. to Denny Way.

Eastlake Ave.

1. Add U-turn or center turn lane to allow southbound left-turn from Eastlake Ave. to northbound I-5 express lanes south of Denny Way.
2. Add signal at Eastlake Ave. and Thomas St.
3. Add signal at Eastlake Ave. and Republican St.

Bicycle Projects

Improve Around-the-Lake Bicycle Facilities

1. Include bicycle lanes on Fairview Ave. between Eastlake Ave. and Valley St.
2. Modify intersection for bicycle/pedestrian access on Fairview (near Eastlake).

Bicycle Routes

1. Add sign for Lakeview Ave. across I-5.
2. Add sign for bicycle route on Eastlake Ave. E (E. Garfield St. to Denny St.) for bicycle commuters.
3. Add sign for bicycle routes on commonly-used streets per SDOT Bicycle Guide Map.

Maintain/Improve Dexter as a North/South Bicycle Corridor

1. Add sign for bicycle route on Dexter Ave. bicycle lanes to 2nd Ave. bicycle lanes and CCCR proposed bicycle lanes on 4th Ave. (via Blanchard & Bell).

Pedestrian Projects

Cascade Neighborhood Pedestrian Improvements

1. Add up to 16 stop signs at uncontrolled intersections on Thomas and Harrison St. between Fairview and Eastlake Ave.
2. Widen sidewalks on Harrison, Minor & Pontius around Cascade Park.

Improve Denny Way Pedestrian Environment and I-5 Crossing

1. Add 10-foot sidewalk to north side and 5-foot bicycle lane on south side of Denny Way I-5 crossing.
2. Add curb bulb-outs and countdown signals at five Denny Way intersections.

Transit Projects

Create Transit Emphasis/Transit Priority Street on Fairview Ave. N

1. On Fairview Ave., add northbound and southbound transit signal priority at Denny Way.
2. Add northbound que jump (a signal that allows buses to go before cars) and southbound transit signal priority on Fairview Ave. at Harrison St.
3. Add transit signal priority on Fairview Ave. northbound and southbound at Mercer St.
4. Add northbound and southbound transit signal priority on Fairview Ave. at Valley St.

Construct Proposed South Lake Union Streetcar and Trolley Route

1. Construct streetcar on Westlake, Valley and Terry from Westlake Center to Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.
2. Create new route (trolley or other electric) from Uptown to N. Capitol Hill via Mercer or Republican St.

Install Transit Bus Shelters along Bus Routes in Study Area

1. Install nine transit bus shelters and include appropriate lighting at shelters.

MITIGATION PAYMENT TABLE

Use Categories	Payment
Category 1. Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Offices■ Restaurants■ Retail■ Lodging■ Medical Offices	\$1.95 per square foot*
Category 2. Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Research and development labs	\$1.40 per square foot*
Category 3. Including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Warehouse■ Industrial (manufacturing)	\$.60 per square foot*
Category 4. <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Market-rate residential	\$930.00 per dwelling unit

*Gross floor area.

For uses not specifically mentioned in the table, the payment amount shall be determined by the Director. The Director's determination shall be based on the most comparable use(s).